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MILITARY SYSTEM OF THE MUGHALS

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MILITARY SYSTEM OF THE MUGHALS

By

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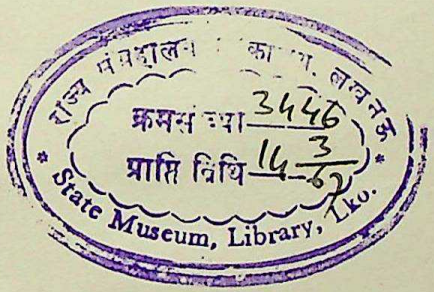
Army Service Corps



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PREFACE

For a long time I had cherished a desire to write something on the Mughal Army. But I had been rather cautious in my enthusiasm. There is not much material and documents available in our country on the military system and institution of the Mughals. However, I started taking active steps to collect materials and references from the known sources ; then I was analysing in my mind as to how best to tackle the problem.

In the meanwhile, I got a bold start from many friends and well-wishers—both seniors and juniors. They were great stimulus to my already doubtful venture. I then started to write something on the subject.

While going through the mass of material I had collected on the subject, I found that most of the books had been published long, long, ago and no modern work of authority is available. However, all these old books were works of authority and I got down to the business of writing.

It had not been all that smooth sailing to find authoritative books. Some of them are available and some are not. Even the National Archives has not got all the volumes. I further found that original historical documents are not all in the Government's possession at a central place, say Delhi. This is a great handicap. These books are scattered all over the Libraries in India and it is very difficult for any enthusiastic student of Indian military history to refer to them. It is therefore necessary, I feel, that such historical documents are centrally kept to facilitate study by research students from all over India.

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In the East not much record has been kept as had been done in the West. Specially the accounts of the military exploits are regrettably silent on facts and details. All we see is a few stray incidents which glorify the achivements of the Emperor and are generally colourful and biased. The student of Indian military history has therefore to take the gist out from the general narratives and form his own opinion and conclusions. I, for myself, have ventured on this unknown path and crave the indulgence of the generous readers.

Most of my information has been taken from the official histories : Works of the recognised authorities, the original documents, and the accounts of the various European and other travellers who had visited India and had left a record of their travels.

I found that these travel talks are interesting and humorous reading but lack details and thoughtful utterances. Hence they may not be very reliable.

The Mughals were essentially an army occupation and were a militant sect. They depended on the force of their arms to keep their hold on the country. All their men depended solely on their kings and no sooner they were dead or a casualty, the whole structure which they had built, broke down and anarchy prevailed. It was round the lives of these great kings that the whole history of the country, their regime and exploits centred. I have therefore attempted to give in brief the character-sketches of each famous Mughal Emperor up to Aurangzeb, with special reference to their military exploits. This is essential to understand the military achievements of the Mughals.

I could not deal with all the campaigns that were fought by each of them because of the lack of details and

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suitable despatches. Hence the main battles (success or failures) have been dealt with in brief as there is not much scope to include any unnecessary anecdotes as have been done by the various historians. What the student of the military history requires is bare facts and certain illustrations which will enable him to understand the situation and the intentions of the commanders in their proper perspective. I have made an attempt from this point of view and hope I am successful.

The life and exploits of the Mughals are fascinating study. They are quite thrilling and vivid and give ample scope to the readers to exercise their imagination which is so vitally necessary in the study of military history.

The military history of the Mughal period is not dull. On the contrary it is as interesting as the European history. But unfortunately owing to paucity of suitable books, very few had taken much interest in them before. Now, I hope, I will be able to inculcate some interest in this important aspect of Indian history. I do not crave to be called a pioneer, neither do I expect to be termed an authority on the subject, but I humbly hope that an interest and inquisitiveness has begun.

In writing this book I have consulted many original books and their translations by authorities. The mass of material is so vast and so old, that it has not been possible for me to seek individual permission either from the authors (most of them are not alive today) or the publishers as their address is not known. Hence I have no other alternative but to seek their permission through the medium of this book and also ask for apology for my inability to do so. I am sure they will appreciate the difficulty and it is never my intention to disclaim their

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authoritative works, but, on the other hand, I am indebted for all they have left to posterity and which no one else, including me, could have done.

My grateful thanks are due to the publishers and authors of :—

Historian's history of the world.
A History of India by Dunbar.
The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59).
Storia Do Mogor (Vols. 1 to 3) by Manucci.
The History of Hindostan (Vols. 1 to 3) by Dow.
History of Mughal Dynasty by Catrou.
Babar by Lane Poole.
An Empire Builder of the 16th Century by Rushbrook Williams,
Akbar by Col. Malleson.
Akbar the Great Mogul by Smith.
History of the Mahrattas by Grant Duff.
The Army of the Indian Mughals by Irving.
Memoirs of Babar, and Ain-I-Akbari by Adul Fazl.

Lastly I am thankful to my wife for her indefatigable help and encouragement to write this book. To her, I humbly dedicate this book.

B. N. MAJUMDAR

NEW DELHI
August, 1959.

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CHAPTER I

THE INDIAN MILITARY HISTORY

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THE INDIAN MILITARY HISTORY

To attempt the writing of a book on Indian Military History is to tread on the footsteps of the unknown. There are very few books on purely military aspects of the Mughals in India, the original documents on the subject have not been left intact, and those that were left for posterity have not been properly preserved. The result is that there is a complete dearth of material on the subject. A few good authoritative books on the general history of the Mughals and the original documents of the Memoirs of Babar and Ain-i-Akbari are available, but, unfortunately, these books do not deal with the specialised subject of the Mughal Army.

No record of the wars fought by the Mughal Army has been accurately kept, nor have the chroniclers recorded the organization and administration of the Mughal Army. It is rather surprising that isolated incidents connected with the wars, in which the Emperors were involved, have been recorded, but no attempt had been made to keep a detailed record of the military system and the institutions. The Mughals were a warlike nation, and their conquest of India and the subsequent consolidation of their empire, was achieved by the force of arms. In the fitness of things, therefore, a complete record of the achievements of their army should have been the fitting duty of the chroniclers, but it is regrettably missing.

Indian and European historians and travellers have made some effort to glean something of military value

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from the mass of the details, stones and records connected with the Mughal rule in India. It must be admitted that the Mughals were the first to keep records of their activities and the government of the country, but as to how they missed the military history of their reigns will always be shrouded in mystery. Let us, therefore, forget this aspect now.

There is nothing very complicated in the military history of the Mughals. The facts and whatever details are available, have been taken from the general narrative of the history of the period. I feel that most of the few military historians have done so, and I could not find any other better approach to the problem, so the reader will find that most of the narratives, tactics and organisation of the wars have been taken out of the general narrative. It is inevitable that the views of the authorities will conflict, so I have taken a middle course and have tried to form my own conclusions from the facts. They may not be in strict conformity with the hitherto accepted stereo-typed views, but I feel that it is necessary to study the subject from a neutral point of view and not to form a biased opinion. The conclusions may vary but it is through discussion that we learn. The plans of the battles are not available, and I could obtain only two such plans from Babar's reign. If I tried to make one, I would be giving a wrong picture, and, therefore, it is better not to make a plan based on the narratives of the campaigns. So much on Indian military history. Now let us analyse as to why we should study military history at all.

It is generally thought that the study and writing of military history lies within the province of the

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historians and no one else. This is untrue. On the other hand it is of prime importance to all, and to soldiers in particular, because it lays the foundation-stone of their professional education and gives them an idea as to how the great Captains of the past lived, trained and fought the wars with all the politcial, economical and military handicaps. The study of history affords us the opportunity to learn from the variety of experiences of the past masters of war, how they made mistakes, and how they overcame them. General Von Schlieffen has made admirable remarks on the necessity for studying military history in these words :—

"Before everyone who wishes to become a C-in-C there lies a volume called the history of war. Its study is not always very amusing but in it one will find facts, often some stirring facts of how everything happened, how it was bound to happen, and how it will happen again". This is not all; history is a great teacher of mankind. Great men and soldiers have emulated and formed themselves on great men and soldiers of the past and have risen to fame. Nepoleon's injuction was "to read and re-read the campaigns of the great Captains."

If we analyse and see how Babar,... a complete foreigner in India, a soldier of fortune...carved a mighty empire for himself and for the generation that came after him, we will see that his superb leadership, toughness, knowledge of the military and polititical aspects, and above all his love and command of men, contributed, in no small measure, to his hold and control of the country.

Similarly, if we study the life and work of Akbar we will see how a benevolent ruler should be a soldier and

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a politician, and how a head of the State should have both soldierly and political capabilities. We see a tendency of this attitude in the modern century.

Let us now consider the other side. How the bigoted and tyrannical reign of Aurangzeb contributed to the downfall of the Mughal empire, how he had created trouble for himself by his religious fanaticism and bigotry, how he squandered his money in the ill-fated campaigns in the Deccan to crush the Mahrattas, and how they raised their heads again no sooner had Aurangzeb returned home after almost 27 years of campaigning, all these are fascinating and instructive studies, and students, specially Service Officers, will find them useful.

The study of military history is a logical, mechanical business which, if followed with intelligence, will lead to good learning and understanding of past events. Being the possessor of a basic knowledge of principles and doctrines, the student of military history "will understand the reasons behind a Commander's choice of action, and he will more quickly grasp the fundamental reasons for the success or failure of an operation he chooses to study. The lessons so learned will remain with him longer, because they are a print of the actual experience of war."

There is a general tendency to select those campaigns where success was achieved, and ignore those which resulted in failure. It is necessary that students of military history should also study those campaigns where defeats were sustained, and thus learn the lessons of how to avoid such defeats. I have tried to avoid doing so, and have selected only those famous wars which were

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fought during the reigns of the emperors, and on which a certain amount of material is available.

We must study military history, even though it may be dull, with as much enthusiasm as possible. All concerned must be enthusiastic and imaginative. It must be stressed that there are certain fundamental "laws" and techniques of war, and that if those are carefully studied from past history, and intelligently applied to the present, keeping in view the modern methods of war and the advancement in technical science, then many of the pit alls which are likely to be encountered in a future war, will be avoided.

Even in the 20th Century,t he study of past military history should not be ignored. It should be the stock-in-trade of every professional soldier and politician. study may not be so attractive in the beginning, but, once the interest is roused, it will pay a rich dividend in time of a future war. It enlarges the knowledge and broadens the outlook, and trains the service officers in particular and others in general, to apply the knowledge gained, to future wars keeping in view the scientific developments that have taken place. "History is a universal experience—not of one but of many others under manifold conditions."

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CHAPTER II

INDIA ON THE EVE OF THE MUGHAL CONQUEST

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INDIA ON THE EVE OF THE MUGHAL CONQUEST

There comes a time in the life of a nation when it begins to degenerate, thereby leading it to conditions which may result in its downfall. The Tughlaks who were the rulers of India before the advent of the Mughals on the Indian scene, suffered the same fate that befell the Hindus when they lost their suzerainty over India. They were a forceful and virile people when they originally came to India, but had lost their enthusiasm. They were surrounded with cheap luxuries, they had lost their aloofness by moral degeneration, and had become a body of squabbling crowd with no control or government over their Empire which they had ruled since 664 A.D.

Though TIMUR first knocked at the gates of India in 1398, and passed over like a whirlwind with allh is loot and plunder, the danger was not realised by the degenerating regime of the Tughlaks. The result was that when Babar came in 1525, the unwarlike, debauched, irreligious, and half-caste rulers of the Tughlak dynasty were not able to withstand the enthusiasm, vigour and power of a new religion, and the energy of the fiercer and virile Mughals.

On the eve of the Mughal conquest, India was seething with discontent. Timur's invasion completely disorganised whatever semblance of order and government had existed during the Tughlak regime. Many Governors of the provinces, who owed their allegiance to the Lodi Emperors, became independent, and vied to occupy the throne of Delhi. There was no political decorum, and

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the rise and fall of the empire depended on the personality and powers of the kings who sat on the throne of Delhi. The kings themselves normally led their armies in the battle fields, and, consequently, when they did not do so, whatever the reason, their inability to lead their troops personally jeopardized their chances of success, and even threatened the survival of the empire they had founded by force of arms.

Such were the prevailing conditions in India, when Alam Khan, uncle of Ibrahim Lodi, unable to hold his own against the intrigues of other princes, invited Babar to give him assistance in order to subdue these rebellious princes, who were trying to break away from the overlordship of the emperor at Delhi. Even though the advent of the Muslims in India gave a certain sense of unity to the disunited Indians, it was, however, more so from outward appearances than as a result of inward desires. The power of the sword of the reigning monarchs contributed to a degree a semblance of political stability and unity, but it collapsed as soon as the strong hand was removed. "The political units which had seemed so stable proved to be lacking in all the essentials of unity ; the centralised monarchies which had seemed so strong fell apart into helpless congeries of jarring fragments."[1]

In the second half of the fourteenth century (when Timur came to India) the central authority at Delhi was growing weak due to many and diverse causes, and their control over the outlying provinces was weakening. Many such princes and governors of the provinces severed

1. An Em ire Builder of the 16th Century by Rushbrook Williams.

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their connections with Delhi, and declared their independence." And in this way it came about that the Empire of Delhi was reduced to a shadow of its former self, until the invasion of Timur in 1398 brought the tottering structure to ground, and invested its end, all undeservedly, with the dignity of a tragedy.[1]

Politically, India was most unstable during this period. The whole country was divided into "petty realms" whose princes and governors carved small principalities for themselves without any sanction or control of the Emperor at Delhi. These main kingdoms were Sindh, Multan, Punjab, Jaunpur, Bengal, Gujrat, Malwa, Khandesh, Deccan, Rajputana (Marwar and Mewar), Vijaynagar, and Orissa. The kingdoms in the far south have not been taken into account as they exercised little or no influence on the politics of the then India.

On the whole the country was seething with discontent, and an open invitation to any foreigner to come and conquer it. This was what actually happened. The last nail to the coffin of the Tughluk dynasty was struck by the nefarious and atrocious deeds of Ibrahim Lodi. Prof. Rushbrook Williams has aptly commented : "It may well be imagined that a tactless and unpopular ruler could involve this strange policy in inextricable confusion. Sikander's son, Ibrahim, though brave, was haughty, morose, and suspicious. The result was disastrous. Not only did he alienate the nobles upon whose support his power rested; not only did he drive into active opposition the very men he ought to have conciliated at all hazards; but, to make matters worse, he attempted to

1. An Empire Builder of the 16th Century by Rushbrook Williams.

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play the tyrant. His cruelties and crimes destroyed all the good work of his father and grandfather. The kingdom of Delhi was distracted; the Punjab and Jaunpur were in open revolt ; twice had Ibrahim been defeated by the Rajputs."[1]

In his own Memoirs, Babar has also given an admirable summing up of the prevalent conditions in India on the eve of his conquest : "The people of Hindustan[1] and particularly the Afghans, are a strangely foolish and senseless race, possessed of little reflection and less foresight. They can neither persist in and manfully support a war, nor can they continue in a state of amity and friendship."[2]

Ironically it was the Lodis who invited Babar to invade India. Alam Khan Allauddin, the uncle of Ibrahim, invited Babar to help him snatch the throne of Delhi. As a result of this invitation, Babar invaded India on 17th November 1523, with 10,000 cavalrymen. When he reached Lahore, he was joined up by various discontented princes, specially Daulat Khan, who had been recently defeated in battle by Ibrahim Lodi. At last the most cherished dream that Babar had, since his conquest of Kabul in 1504, came to fruition in 1525. In his Memoirs Babar has said : "I had always been bent on subduing Hindustan."[2]

From Lahore Babar's advance on Delhi was uneventful. He was engaged by the various kings through whose territories his line of advance passed, but all these were small skirmishes. As he continued his advance, various govern-

1. An Empire Builder of the 16th Century by Rushbrook Williams.
2. Memoirs of Babar.

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ors and princes, who had broken away from the control of Delhi, joined in order to offer battle to Ibrahim Lodi. Thus Babar's army was increased to many thousands more than his original 10,000 "chosen horses" as and when the nobles, governors and princes joined him, complete with their armies.

At last when Babar and his army reached Shawaband, Ibrahim was waiting to give him battle. There was no doubt in the mind of Babar that Delhi would not fall into his hands without a tough struggle. But he had already judged the inferiority of the Indian troops during the past engagements he had fought during the course of of his advance on Delhi. He was not to be dismayed, and the stage was set for the final battle for the conquest of India by the Mughals.

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CHAPTER III

THE MUGHAL EMPERORS

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THE MUGHAL EMPERORS

To understand the wars and military system of the Mughals, it is necessary to appreciate the character of each emperor that sat on the throne of Delhi. Unlike the modern age, the 14th Century wars reflected the character and capabilities of the emperors who personally led their armies. In order, therefore, to understand the military achievements during the period 1525 to 1857, (strictly speaking only till 1707), it is necessary to study the life-history of each monarch that ruled from Delhi.

Most of the Mughal emperors, starting from Babar, were good administrators, soldiers and leaders of men. Some of them were also astute politicians who had a good knowledge of the country and its people, their manners and customs, with the result that they governed India with magnanimity, and with the co-operation and help of all the resident people. The Mughal emperors thus ushered India into a period of military conquest with revolutionary weapons never seen before, of faith and goodwill, and of stability of organisation and administration.

In this chapter I propose to briefly deal with the salient features of the character and capabilities of each of the Mughal emperors in so far as they relate to their military achievements.

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BABAR (1483-1530)

Babar is a curious mixture of the "daring and restlessness of the nomad Tartar" and the "culture and unbanity of the Persian." Born in the year 1483, he was the founder of the Mughal Empire in India in 1525.

It was by heredity that Babar was destined to be a conqueror. Prof Rushbrook Williams has said : "Fate had joined forces with nature to make him a conqueror by environment, surrounded from his earliest infancy by an atmosphere of intrigue and ambition."[1]

Babar was groomed in the art of intrigue, diplomacy and fighting from his very birth. As he advanced in age, the factional strifes of his relatives in Farghana gave him sufficient scope to practise all the arts with which he was already conversant. He was more and more involved and took an active part to gain possession of the kingdom left behind by his father but claimed by many of his relatives, both from his father's and mother's sides. However, gradually by his strength of character, his ability to suffer hardships under all conditions, his attitude of firmness to the extent of ruthlessness combined with humanity, his astute sense of diplomacy and his extraordinary power of leadership, he consolidated his position on the throne, and thereafter began to think of India. To quote Prof. Rushbrook Williams : "But for all his love of action, it is perhaps in his patience and his endurance that he shows most plainly his greatness of mind."[1]

1. An Empire Builder of the 16th Century.

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Babar was born and bred up in the hard and unkind school of adversity. He was never cowed down by miseries that fate showered on him from time to time. On the contrary, they strengthened his determination and the will to fight against all odds. His persevering mind coupled with all the other qualities previously described, enabled him to carve an Empire for the Mughals in India.

The ding-dong battles of his early life fought in Farghana and Samarakand, his adversity in exile and during flight, the conquest of Kabul, Herat and Kandahar, gave him enough experience in the conduct of siege warfare, employment of horsed cavalry, the assault and reduction of fortresses, and the use of artillery. They enabled him to achieve a swift and resounding success against all the enemies with whom he fought during his conquest of India.

The use and development of artillery, called "feringiha" by the Mughals, was the most notable feature during his age. The Memoirs of Babar contain an eloquent description of the casting of the cannon and his artillery officer, Ustad Ali Khan.

Time and again Babar had to deal with discontented soldiers who were at times keen to return to their homes in Kabul, and did not like the hardships of difficult campaigning in the hot climate of India. But again Babar showed his qualities as the leader of men when, by his speech, force of character, and toughness, he brought the mutinuous crowd under control and advanced for the conquest of India. Dr. Lane Poole describes the situation in these words: "The troops began to murmur. They

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longed for the cool air of Kabul, and even made ready to return. They looked upon India as a buccaneer looked on a galleon, the prize money secured, they wished to make sail. They had to deal with an obstinate man, however, and Babar summoned the chief officers together, and made them a speech. He recalled their past toil and labours together, the weary marches and grievous hardships, and reminded them that all these had been endured for the sake of the great reward which was now theirs."[1]

What sort of soldier was Babar? What soldierly qualities did he have? It is rather difficult to glean much data on this fact of his career, because they are so intermingled with the chronicles of his war. But to say that he had no equal in his age would not be an exaggeration. Alexander Dow has remarked : "He rendered the most dangerous enterprises easy, by his undaunted courage and perseverance, which rose above all difficulties, and made him much more the object of admiration in his adversity than in the height of his prosperity. Nor did he forget himself in the latter, but always behaved with that moderation and equanimity which characterises a great soul."[2]

At times he displayed certain inhuman qualities by ordering the wholesale massacre of the women and children after the capture of a city, but these were the very few occasions of his barbaric enthusiasm of genealogy, but "he was a prince of great humanity, and carried his generosity to such excess, that it bordered upon prodigality. With regard to the first, he so often pardoned in-

1. The Story of the Nations, Vol. 59.
2. The History of Hindustan.

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gratitude and treason, that he seemed to make a principle of rendering good for evil. He thus disarned vice, and made the wicked the worshippers of his virtue."[1]

In addition to the soldierly qualities, Babar was an excellent writer and composer of poems. He had a simple and lucid style of writing. His monumental work is his own Memoirs, which has been written in a simple, unaffected and pure style. Mr. Lane Poole has aptly said : "Hence his Memoirs are no rough soldier's chronicle of marches and counter-marches, escapes, mines, blinds, gabions, palisadoes, ravelins, half-moons and such trumpery; they contain the personal impressions and acute reflections of a cultivated man of the world, well read in Eastern literature, a close and curious observer, quick in perception, a discerning judge of persons, and a devoted lover of nature ; one, moreover, who was well able to express his thoughts and observations in clear and vigorous language."[2]

Babar's Memoirs is an outstanding document throwing most of the light on his own self and the prevailing conditions in the then India. Mr. Beveridge paid a tribute in these words : "His autobiography is one of those priceless records which are for all times, and is fit to rank with the confessions of St. Augustine and Rousseau, and the memoirs of Gibbon and Newton. In Asia it stands almost alone".[3]

HUMAYUN (1508-1556)

Unlike his illustrious father, Humayun was a curious

1. The Story of the Nations, Vol. 59.
2. Babar
3. Calcutta Review, 1897.

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mixture of an astronomer and a soldier-politician. From the time of his ascendancy to the throne of Delhi in 1530, he had been facing plenty of family and other troubles from the far-flung empire. His brothers Kamran, Bahadur, king of Gujrat, and Sher Shah from Bihar, took up arms against him. Of these Sher Shah was only successful, and by trickery he defeated Humayun. He was thus forced to flee from one place to another, often living under very wretched conditions, and eventually fled to Persia where he designed the ways and means of re-conquering what he had lost in India.

Born in the year 1508, when his father Babar was deeply involved in consolidating his position, Humayun had a hard schooling in the art of warfare under the able guidance of his experienced father. From the age of 14, Humayun fought in battles, commanding his father's troops, and, in India, he fought wars which were for his dynasty, the Mughal empire, and the throne of Delhi.

Babar laid the foundation of the Mughal empire, but it was not so securely laid when he died. It was left to his son to secure the loose ends of the empire which had been hurriedly secured for him by force of arms. But he had to face innumerable difficulties to keep his throne secure. Father Francis Catrou has rightly remarked : "The authority of Babar whilst he lived curbed the revolting spirit of the natives. But the commencement of a new reign, in a monarchy of such recent creation, furnished an opportunity for intrigue, and the setting up of various pretensions."[1]

1. History of the Mughal Dynasty.

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After Babar's death, the Mughal dynasty in India degenerated. The wealth and wine of the country had made them slack, slovenly and pleasure loving. Father Catrou gives an illuminating description of the state of affairs : "They were no longer those gallant conquerors, of whom a small number had, under Babar, brought into subjection a great kingdom, and put to flight the largest armies. They were men already enervated by their residence in India, prone through the heat of the climate to indulgence, and the neglect of discipline."[1] No wonder Humayun also fell in line with the prevailing condition of his compatriots in the country. As a result, he lost the crucial battle in his struggle with Sher Shah, and lost his empire and the throne of Delhi.

What sort of man was Humayun who lost in a few years all that was gained by his illustrious father? Dr. Lane Poole makes some revealing remarks on the character of Humayun when he says : "The young prince was indeed a gallant and loveable fellow, courteous, witty and accomplished as his father, warm hearted and emotional, almost quixotic in his notion of honour and magnanimity, personally brave, as indeed were all the princes of his house and capable of great energy on occasions. But he lacked character and resolution. He was incapable of sustained effort, and after a moment of triumph would bury himself in his harem and dream away of precious hours in the opium eater's paradise, whilst his enemies were thundering at the gate.....His character attracts but never dominates. But as a king he was a failure."[1] This is an admirable summing up

1. History of the Mughal Dynasty.

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of Humayun's character, and, even though he was a perfect gentleman, he was no good as a king, soldier and administrator. At the time he came on the Indian scene, the king should have had a "firm grasp of the military situation and resolution to meet it." What was required was the quality of a soldier, and this quality Humayun lacked to a marked degree.

The political condition of the country was far from stable. George Dunbar describes the situation in these words : "But Humayun's position was insecure. Bengal was unconquered, Bahadur Shah, the powerful Afghan king of Gujrat and Malwa, was actively hostile, and Humayun's brothers were openly disloyal ; while the intrigues of the Portuguese, now masters of the Western seaboard, created a disturbing influence."[2] This state of affairs in the country needed a strong hand to quell the disturbances and hold together the disintegrating parts of the vast Empire. But Humayun was incapable of such an effort with the result that he had to flee and seek asylum in Persia.

However, eventually, Humayun staged a come-back at the head of an Army of 15,000 horsemen, and got back all that he had lost to Sher Shah.

Humayun was incompetent as a soldier. He did not grasp the military situation of the day, and time and again, when he had the enemy thoroughly beaten, he did not follow the re-treating enemy, and thus gave them opportunity to reform and fight against him in subsequent battles. At times he showed a remarkable flair for surprise

1. The Story of the Nations.

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attacks and ruses when he "introduced armed men in women's litters" during the attack on the Rohtas forts. There is, however, one quality he lacked to a marked degree. His man-management was very poor. "His troops were demoralised by dissipation, disheartened by inaction, and reduced by sickness." The hardy Mongolian soldiers were "suffering the inevitable degeneration that overtakes a hardy race when exposed to the luxuries of wealth and the influence of an enervating climate."[1]

Humayun's handling of the military situation on various occasions was also defective. Dr. Lane Poole says— "But his worst enemy was himself. Instead of taking a statesmanlike view of the situation, meeting the most pressing danger first, and crushing one antagonist before he engaged another, he frittered away his army in divided commands, and deprived of its full strength ; he left one enemy unsubdued behind him while he turned to meet another ; and when victory by chance rewarded his courage, rather than his tactics he reposed upon his laurels and made merry with his friends, whilst his foes used the precious time in gathering their forces for a fresh effort. Had he brought the whole of his strength to bear upon the enemy in turn, he might have been successful ; for Babar's troops were still the men who had won Delhi and defeated Sanga, and Babar's generals were still in command of their divisions. But Humayun weakened their valour and destroyed their confidence by division and vacillation, neglected the counsels of the commanders, and displayed such indecision that it is a marvel that any

1. The Story of the Nations, Vol. 59.

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still adhered to his falling fortunes."[1] Such were the deplorable military qualities of a king, who, more than any body should have possessed them to a very marked degree, to keep his throne secure in an age when such qualities only were respected.

After regaining the throne at Delhi, Humayun did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his labour. He died in 1556 leaving behind Akbar to complete the unfinished work. "His end was of a piece with his character, He tumbled through life, and he tumbled out of it."[2]

AKBAR (1542-1605)

Born in adversity in the year 1542, when Humayun was fleeing from place to place after losing his Empire at Delhi to Sher Shah, Akbar was the doyen of the Mughals who came both before and after him. Akbar had his baptism of soldiering at the early age of 14, when he took part in the battle of Sirhind under his father. Thereafter he had further experience in the conduct of military campaigns against Sikander.

All these campaigns early in age stood him in good stead when he gradually consolidated his empire during his life time. Akbar is known and termed 'Great' more for his statesmanlike qualities and as an administrator, than as a soldier. But he contributed more to the military science of his age than any other single individual.

At the time of his accession to the throne, Akbar was

1. The Story of the Nations. (Vol. 59).
2. The Story of the Nations. (Vol. 59).

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only 14 years old, and Bairam Khan was the regent and adviser. During the period of the regency, Akbar had to be guided by the regent in all his activities, and he did not relish this control as he had, at times, to do certain things which were not to his liking. Akbar's reign consists of three periods.....the regency till 1560, the harem government till 1562, and lastly his own, when he fully established himself as the Emperor of India, till his death in 1605. What was lost by Humayun was regained by him. Gwalior, Ajmer and Jaunpur were annexed. Thereafter many more territories were added to his domain until it embraced the whole of India. Throughout his reign he pursued a systematic policy of military conquest combined with diplomacy. Gondwana was conquered in 1563 ; the rebellious Uzbegs were subdued in 1567 ; the Rajput war was successfully concluded in 1567 ; Gujrat was annexed in 1572, Bengal submitted to his prowess in 1576 after the battle of Rajmahal ; Kashmir came under his sway in 1591 ; Orissa and Sind were subdued in 1590 and 1592 respectively, Buluchistan in 1594, and lastly the Deccan was added during closing years of his reign in 1596. The Hindu kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda were spared his onslaught as he could not reach so far south. Thus in Akbar's reign the foundations were laid and secured for the emperorship of the Mughals over practically the whole of India.

Akbar was well educated by capable tutors during his childhood, and he continued his learning even after he had become emperor. As a boy he evinced a keen interest in poetry and art, and also for outdoor life. He was an "omnivorous listener" and had a "prodigious

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memory". He was born in the midst of hardship and brought up in captivity. His courage was exercised in his father's wars, and his prudence, called forth by the delicacy of the situation during the ascendancy of Bairam. He was engaging in his manners, well formed in his person, excelled in all exercises of strength and agility, and showed exuberance in his amusements, such as in taming of unbroken elephants, and in rash encounters with tigers and other wild beasts. Yet, with his disposition, and a passionate love of glory, he founded his hopes of fame at least as much on the wisdom and liberality of his Government as in military success. It required all his great qualities to maintain him in the situation in which he was placed.[1]

There is no doubt that Akbar's place in history has been secured by his statesmanlike qualities of bringing the various warring tribes into the common fold, his revenue system and other administrative measures, and lastly by his conquests. Akbar never forgot his Army which, it is estimated, was near about 4,400,000 soldiers of all types and departments. The conduct of the Army has been fully laid down in the 'Ayeni Akbari'.

In addition to his scholary training, Akbar had a good grooming in practical soldiering. Sir George Dunbar says : "But with all this he was intensely practical, a master of detail, and uncommonly useful with his hands. One of his hobbies was to found cannon in his arsenal ; and his active brain was continually busy with inventions from batteries which could be fired in salvos of seventeen

1. Hindustan's History of the World.

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guns with one match, to useful devices in elephant gear, and novel forms of travelling carriages."[1]

This was not all. Dr. Lane Poole says : "Akbar had mechanical genius. He devised a new method for making gun-barrels of spirally rolled iron, which could not burst, he invented a machine which cleaned sixteen barrels at once.....There were many other things that he improved by his talent for mechanical invention."[2]

In war Akbar was indefatigable and unscrupulous. He never allowed much compassion for the defeated enemy, and allowed the common practice of trampling the prisoners under the elephants." He could be terribly stern, and was subject to paroxysms of rage, in one of the which he threw a servant from the battlements for falling asleep in the palace ; but his natural inclination was ever towards mercy, and his forgiveness often cost him dear."[3]

Personally he was very courageous and resourceful. On many occasions during a battle he gave fight to the enemy without caring if he was strong enough to challenge the strength of his adversaries. "His character as a warrior was that of an intrepid partizan rather than a great general."[3]

Whatever it is, Akbar carved an empire out of chaos and anarchy. He gave the country for the first time a stable Government, a sense of unity and nationhood, and tolerance of thought and religion. He also gave India a sense of security against both internal and external

1. A History of India
2. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59)
3. The History of Hindustan by Dow.

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aggression, and had a well organized army and cavalry, elephants and artillery.

The reign of Akbar was the golden age of Indian History. Sir George Dunbar rightly says : "A born leader of men and one of the mightest kings in history, Akbar transformed the Mughals from military adventurers into a great dynasty."[1]

JEHANGIR (1569-1627)

Jehangir was a complete misfit for the throne of Delhi. Father Catrou says : "He was a voluptous prince who passed the greater part of his life in the pleasures of the harem ; and who abandoned himself to a species of sottishness, which was degrading to human nature."[2]

Such was the man who became emperor in 1605. It is an unpleasant truth that "sons dissipate what their father gained by the sweat of their brow ; nor do all sons imitate the good qualities of their ancestors."[3] Jahangir was quite contented to dwell upon the fruits of his great father. He was a debauchee and fond of wine. He was generous and fond of pomp and splendour. He was liberal and approachable by any one. One of the other qualities which he displayed was his tolerant attitude to other religions, specially Christianity.

He was a curious mixture of cruelty and gentleness. At times he showed generosity even to the extent of humility, but yet revelled in barbaric pleasures. He was

1. A History of India
2. History of the Mughal Dynasty.

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rather indiscreet in his dealings with his soldiers. Mr. Niccolao Manucci gives a very apt description of such beastly pleasures of Jehangir :—

"When any soldier came into his presence with a courageous look or with his turban cocked, he called him near and with one of the said lancets pierced his nose. If the soldier showed that it hurt him, he ordered the man to be ejected from the court with cuffs and buffeting, saying that a soldier who was afraid of such a little piece of iron as that, would never in war-time endure lance-thrusts and sword-cuts. On the contrary, if the soldier made believe to meet the lancet without fear, he would double the man's pay and his estimation at court. The king would say that such men deserved the name of soldier..... they were veritable men of war." [1]

Jehangir fought no battle of note. Most of his wars were concerned with the subjugation of recalcitrant princes, rebellions of his gevernors and fratricidal wars with his sons and other favourites of the famous queen Nurjehan.

The fame and prosperity of the Mughal Emperors rose to its zenith during the reign of Akbar but, unfortunately, love of wine and influence of women in the running of the Government made Jehangir's reign the beginning of the decline of the Mughal dynasty as well as of the empire.

To sum up the military qualities of Jehangir in the words of Mr Alexander Dow : "In war he had no abilities,

1. Storia do Mogor by Manucci.

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he was fond of peace and tranquillity ; and rather a lover than an encourager of the arts of civil life."[1]

With his death in 1627 ended the most unproductive era from the point of view of military achievements.

SHAHJEHAN (1592—1666)

Shahjehan came to the throne through a bloody path of murders and assassinations. There were several claimants to the throne in his younger brother Shahryar, and Dawat Baksh, the son of Khusru. But he and his adherents made short work of his rivals and he ascended the uneasy throne of India. It was not all peace and tranquillity in India during this regime. Shahjehan had to fight the rebellions in Bundelkhand, Ahmednagar and Deccan, against the Portuguese in 1632, subjugate Bijapur and Golconda and other Deccan States, and lastly the unsuccessful campaigns in North-Western borders of India to regain the lost provinces of Kandahar, Balkh and Badakshan.

The deterioration in the empire and particularly in the army, which began during the reign of Jehangir, was well set in during this reign. Sir George Dunbar remarks : "The army of Akbar in spite of its usual encumbrance of an Imperial court was efficient. But by the reign of Shahjehan deterioration had already set in, and the policy of increasing the weight of the heavy artillery did nothing to counteract it."[2]

The emperor was a man of sound judgment and

1. A history of Hindoostan.
2. A History of India.

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knowledge of the affairs of the State. But he was rather inclined to be intolerant of those who were non-Muslims and thus made religion over-ride statesmanship. He was a great builder and lover of art. Even to this day the buildings that were bu ' uring his reign bear eloquent testimony to the refined taste and grandeur of Mughal art. But all this love of art and literature was of little use, when use of the sword was a necessity to hold the empire togther. "The Emperor and the Court had reached a pitch of luxury that fostered effeminacy." (2)

Shahjehan was intolerant and it was the persecution of the Hindus that contributed to his downfall. This activity was increased after the death of his beloved queen Mumtazmahal.

As far as dealing with his soldiers and generals was concerned, the Emperor was very considerate. He maintained a huge standing army of 1,44,500 horses, elephants, camels ; the men were armed with bows and arrows, javelins, daggers, muskets and cannon and was a good fighting machine. He had a good command and control over his army, but at times they did not show either good fighting qualities or loyalty. But on the whole it was a better outfit than his father's and could be relied upon.

As Shahjehan grew old he passed the affairs of the state to his four sons, and thus sowed the seeds for a bitter civil war between them. "The three youngest, Suja, Aurangzeb and Morad grudged the eldest Dara, the succession which his father intended for him. They declared themselves independent in the governments which had

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been assigned to them and assumed the titles of kings. Shahjehan himself was conquered by their arms and ended his life as a prisoner."[1] The fratricidal war ended in the victory of Aurangzeb who ascended the throne in 1659 after liquidating his rival brothers.

Shahjehan was kept in prison by his son and died full of years in 1666.

AURANGZEB (1659—1707)

For the first time in the history of the Mughals a bigoted Mussalman came to the throne of Delhi in 1659. He had an indomitable resolution and was a staunch upholder of the philosophy of his own religion. He was a puritan and nothing mattered in his life than to adhere to the principles and tenets of Islam as laid down in the Holy Book. No sentiment of the courtiers, princes, ministers and soldiers bothered him, and swayed him from his already destined path. These traits of his character involved him in various religious wars, and even in his last days he was not destined to enjoy peace and tranquillity.

As Aurangzeb was a stickler in his food he was rather lean and thin and suffered from time to time various physical ailments which made him weak. But inspite of his physical handicaps he had a lion's courage. Dr. Lane Poole has rightly said : "His was no ordinary courage. That he was physically brave is only to say he was a Mughal prince of the old lion-hearted stock. But he was amongst the bravest men in their valiant rank. In the

1. Historian's History of the World.

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crisis of the campaign in Balkh, when the enemy 'like locusts and ants' hemmed him on every side, and steel was slashing all round him, the setting sun heralded the hour of evening prayer ; Aurangzeb, unmoved amid the din of battle, dismounted and bowed himself on the bare ground in the complicated ritual of Islam, as composedly as if he had been performing the rite in the mosque at Agra."[1]

But with all these high qualities he was suspicious by nature and never delegated authority to his subordinates. On slightest suspicion he used to kill or imprison the ministers and even his own sons.

In spite of all the self renunciation he adhered to the pomp and splendour of the Mughal courts. He maintained almost all the Mughal customs of ceremonial, festivity and pomp and splendour. But in addition he had a glowing passion for the art of Government. Being educated by men of letters and of virtue in his father's court Aurangzeb showed the flair of his genius from his very childhood. His assiduity prevailed over the dullness of his tutor, and he made a progress far beyond his years."[2]

Schooled in the atmosphere of justice and fairplay in the court of Shahjehan, Aurangzeb showed qualities of uncommon sagacity and equity. He attended his father's court and at times gave his own views which were very much appreciated and also upheld by his father.

1. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59)
2. The History of Hindustan by Alexander Dow.

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He had a thorough knowledge of the affairs of the state even to the extent of minutest details. He kept a strict watch over all his subordinates by spies so that they did not indulge in corrupt practices. He was also a good builder. Throughout the state good sarais were built and maintained at public expense, for the convenience of travellers. Universities were founded and men of letters were encouraged to conduct researches and write treatises." He called them to court ; and, placed them, according to their abilities, in offices in the State ; those who were versed in the commentaries on the Koran were raised to the dignity of Judges, in the different court of justices."[1]

Above all these he had remarkable soldierly qualities. He took keen interest in his troops and reviewed them regularly with pomp and grandeur; though physically frail he had remarkable strength of body and mind ; he knew well the use of fire-arms and was a good shot. Mr. Alexander Dow has rightly summed his military qualities in the following words : "Aurangzeb was as experienced in war, as he was in the arts of peace. Though his personal courage was almost unparallelled, he always endeavoured to conquer more by stratagem than by force. To succeed by art threw honour upon himself ; to subdue by power acquired to others fame. Such was his coolness in action, that, at the rising and setting sun, the times appointed for prayer, he never neglected to attend to that duty, though in the midst of a battle. Devout to excess, he never engaged in action without prayer ; and for every victory,

1. The History of Hindustan

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he ordered a day of thanks-giving and one of festivity and joy."[1]

To sum up, Aurangzeb's long reign from 1659 to 1707 was the culminating point of the empire founded by Babar and consolidated by Akbar ; It was also the start of its decay which had already set in during the reign of Shahjehan. He had enlarged the empire, seen the birth of two military Hindu nationalities in the Marat has and the Sikhs but the foundations were not strengthened. Immediately after his death Deccan, Oudh and Bengal threw off the Mughal yoke. His empire and conquests were held together both by statesmanship, diplomacy, treachery and also by military prowess. A fitting conclusion to Aurangzeb's life can be given in the words of Dr. Lane Poole : "Aurangzeb's life had been a vast failure indeed, but he had failed grandly. His glory is that he could not force his soul, that he dared not desert the colours of his faith. The great puritan of India was such stuff as win the martyr's crown."[1]

THE LATER MUGHALS

It is not of much interest to recount the exploits and deeds of the Mughals that came in succession after Aurangzeb. All the emperors that succeeded were weak, inefficient and fond of luxury and debauchery. Their reign was made miserable by the rise of the Marathas Sikhs, and foreigners like English, French and the Portuguese who originally came in as traders and finished up founding empires for themselves. Lastly, the invasion

1. The History of Hindustan.
2. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59)

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of Nadir Shah sounded the death knell of the already-tottering empire of the Mughals. The rebellious elements inside the country took full advantage of the disorganisation started by the invasion, and eventually paved the way for the rise and consolidation of the British conquest of India.

The years 1757-1761 were fatefulin Indian History. The destinies of India now lay in the hands of the British, who had, by now, through trade concession and force of arms, established themselves in the country. The battle of Panipat and the failure of the Marathas closed the Indian suzerainty of India.

Thus ended the Mughal rule after 350 years which gave India, among other things, a semblance of military organisation and fighting technique of a revolutionary type.

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CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLES

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BATTLES

In the foregoing chapter I have given in brief the character sketch of each notable emperor with special reference to his soldierly qualities. This information is essential in order to assess the quality, quantity and organisation of their armies. All the wars and campaigns fought in this age reflected the character and capabilities of their emperors, as they were the actual commanders both in peace and war, helped only by other generals as subordinates.

To understand the achievements of the Mughal Army, it is, therefore, neessary to have a knowledge of the various wars fought by the emperors during the period of their reigns. It will be rather difficult to put forward in detail each battle, war or campaign because their chroniclers, official or unofficial, did not leave the details on record for posterity. Most of the facts now available to the world are rather vague and based, at times, on certain inaccurate information. But it is the only material that is now available and we have to depend on them.

Even though detailed information may not be available, the general picture will give us some idea of the conduct of the wars during the Mughal times. In order to appreciate them it is necessary to have a brief idea of each important war.

Militarily, the reigns of Babar, Akbar and Aurangzeb were the most productive period in medieval India. During other reigns it was not so, as they were mostly

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local engagements in which not much was at stake. In others the fates of nations, kingdoms and personalities were involved.

Like all wars, the wars in medieval India were a continuation of the policy of the Government, and had the full backing of the emperor. These were fought with organised armies and the penalty of defeat was very severe. Hence the wars of the middle ages were fought with much fury and hatred. But the Indian wars were mostly religious wars, at times changing the complexion to a religious political struggle.

At places I have attempted to illustrate the battle formations employed during the battle by both the sides, but, in the absence of any detailed information on the subject, they may be open to comments. It will, however, give a rough idea of the various types of formations employed during the battles.

With the advent of the Mughals, warfare, as practised in India during the Muhammedan rulers, underwent considerable changes both in the use and type of weapons. It was the Muhammedans who introduced gunpowder in India, and this completely revolutionised the character of of warfare, formerly fought with elephants, bows and arrows.

PANIPAT (1526)

The battle of Panipat again decided, for the third time, the mastership of India and this time the throne of of India passed to the Mughals on April 21, 1526. "The

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decisive battle was fought on April 21, 1526, on the plain of Panipat—the historic site where the throne of India has been thrice won," says Dr. Lane Poole.[1]

After brushing aside all opposition on his march to Delhi, Babar advanced towards the capital and came to know that Ibrahim Lodi, the reigning emperor, was going to fight the Mughal's bid for the conquest of India. However, both the sides faced each other near the historic site of Panipat, and got busy with the preparation for the coming battle.

As the opposing armies faced each other, Babar took stock of the whole situation. He found that his army was much smaller numerically than the Indian emperor's and his only chance lay in out-fighting and out-generalling the Indian by his superior quality tactics. In his own Memoirs his thoughtful remarks on the situation are in these words : "Ibrahim was a young man of no experience. He was negligent in all his movements: he marched without order ; retired or halted without plan and engaged in battle without foresight,.....and was too miserly to raise additional forces, or even to pay his troops in the field."[2]

On the eve of battle, Ibrahim had 100,000 men, and Babar had only 8,000. This numerical inferiority did not dismay Babar, as he was confident of the better fighting quality of the troops and his aggressive generalship. Actually these facts won Babar the battle.

As the preparations were going on, the troops, however,

1. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59).
2. Memoirs of Babar.

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became restive as they were far away from their homes and also because their enemy was superior in numbers. All these facts dismayed the zeal to fight, and Babar realising this danger, attempted a surprise night attack on the Afghan position. This attack failed as his troops lost their way in the darkness and there was confusion all round. But this raid had one effect.....it forced Ibrahim to give battle to Babar earlier than expected as he became rather panicky.

efore forming his army in battle array, Babar made a short appreciation of the situation as he faced them. It will be recalled that even though Babar had only 8,000 troops, his effective strength during the battle of Panipat was still short. A considerable number of troops had been left behind in garrison duties, security of communications and wastage due to casualties. "If he were to triumph over the immensely superior forces of his adversary, it could only be by means of an effective combination, between his highly trained cavalry and his new firearms. Ustad Ali and Mustafa between them could do deadly work when they were confronted by a dense mass of enemy ; but both cannoneers and matchlock men were liable to be ridden down and overwhelmed unless carefully protected by covering force of Infantry and cavalry."

"But how were these covering forces to be supplied from the tiny army ? For, unless Babar could contrive to present a front equal in length to the effective front displayed by the enemy, his cavalry would be unable to employ the flanking tactics by which he hoped to roll up the Afghan wings upon the centre. Only by carrying out

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this manoeuvre, and by driving the enemy's forces into a huddled mass upon which Ustad Ali and Mustafa could direct their fire, would Babar be enabled to utilise his artillery to the best advantage," says Prof. Rushbrook Williams.[1]

After appreciating the problem posed above, Babar set upon fighting the enemy on his own chosen ground and in the desired manner. The two main problems to be solved were, firstly, holding the line against superior numbers and, secondly protection of the cannoneers and the matchlock men from being trampled by the charging cavalry.

This is how Babar found the answer to these problems. "Influenced probably by the example of Salim the Grim at Chaldiran in 1514, Babar determined to employ a line of wagons to stiffen his weak front."[1] This was not all. The wagons had to be securely fastened so that they did not give way before the rushing cavalry. This he achieved as follows : "He collected 700 gun-carts and formed a laager by linking them together with twisted bullhides, to break a cavalry charge."[2] What about the protection of the cannoneers? In order to give special shelter to the musketeers and artillery men, small breast-works, sufficiently large to protect one man were constructed in considerable numbers, and arranged six or seven between each wagon along the portion of the front which Ustad Ali and Mustafa were to occupy," says Prof. Rushbrook Williams."[2]

1. An Empire Builder of the 16th Century.
2. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59).

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After completing the preparation of his position, Babar prepared to occupy it and dispose of his army in battle order. His troop dispositions were as follows : "His army was drawn up behind his laager in the usual order, right and left centre, right and left.

"Wing, advance guard, and reserve ; but in addition he had placed flanking parties of Mughals on the extreme right and left, with orders to execute their famous national manoeuvre, the "tulghma" :—a rapid wheel charging the enemy's rear—of which Babar well knew the tremendous effect," describes Dr. Lane Poole Prof. Rushbrook Williams clarifies the detailed occupation in these words "...took up his ground with the town of Panipat sheltering his right wing. On the left, he strengthened position by digging a ditch and constructing an "abatis" of felled trees in such a manner as to render it impossible for the enemy to roll up his line from the left. Secure on both flanks, he now strengthened his centre with the line of breastworks and wagons which he had previously prepared. The line, however, was not continuous ; for, at intervals of only bowshot apart, large gaps were left, wide enough for fifty or a hundred horsemen to charge through the abreast."[1]

After completing the preparations and dispositions of his troops, Babar was ready to meet the Indian troops on the battle field of Panipat. And the day came on 21st April 1526, when the fate of India was to be decided for the next three hundred years.

1. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59).

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Babar was ready but what about Ibrahim ? Unfortunately nothing much is known about Ibrahim's dispositions and preparations for the battle. All we see about the Afghan army is when it advanced against Babar. The battle is ably described by Dr. Lane Poole as follows: "The army of Delhi came straight on, at a quick march without halt from the start. They seemed to be aiming at Babar's right, and he sent up the reserves to its support. As the enemy came up to the ditches, abatis, and hurdles they hesitated, and the pressure of the troops behind threw them into some confusion. Taking advantage of this Babar sent out his Mughal flanking through the gaps in the laager, and they galloped round the enemy and poured their arrows into the rear. Part of the Emperor's left wing, advancing uncautiously, got into difficulties ; but the general's eye was on them, and they were promptly supported from the centre. Meanwhile the right was also hard pressed and Babar sent forward his right centre to their assistance. The master gunner, Ustad Ali, made pretty practice with his "firengi" pieces, in front of the line and was admirably seconded by Mustafa, the Cannoneer on the left centre. The enemy was now engaged on all sides, front, flanks and rear, and their charges, which seemed ineffective to men who had stood up the Mughal's swoop, were easily repulsed and driven back upon their centre, which was already too crowded to be able to use its strength. In this jammed confusion they lay at the mercy of the hardy Turks and Mughals, who fell upon the strangled ranks with deadly effect." [1].

1. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59) and Babar by Lane Poole.

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Thus the vast Afghan army was defeated and they suffered about 15,000 dead on the battlefield. The beaten remnants were hotly pursued by Babar's army till they surrendered. The flying columns of Babar did not give the defeated enemy any time or opportunity to rally and gather further strength. This column occupied Agra and then Delhi and thus brought a glorious victory to a fitting close.

Generally the battle of Panipat is not studied with the critical eye it deserves. It was more important than mere armed clash between the degenerated Pathans and the hardy Turks ; the clash between the two opposing methods of warfare—the Ottoman and the Afghan methods and lastly between the two personalities—the energetic Turk and the degenerated tyrant. Alexander Dow rightly says : "But what contributed most to weigh down the scale of conquest was the degeneracy of the Pathans, effeminated by the luxury and wealth, and dead to all principles of virtue and honour, which their corrupt factions and civil discords had totally effaced ; it being now no shame to fly, no infamy to betray, no breach of honour to murder, and no scandal to change parties. When, therefore, the fear of shame and the love of fame were gone, it was no wonder that a horde, without unanimity, order, or discipline, should fall into the hands of a few brave men."[1]

Militarily it was much more than this. The Mughal army brought new life into the decaying military institution of the Lodis. Not only tactics but a new look in generalship

1. The History of Hindustan.

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was also introduced. It will be recalled that when Babar disposed of his troops in battle array, he positioned himself centrally so that he could control the battle all round him. Thus personal touch and control in the field of battle by the commander came into vogue. "Babar's generalship, however, had much to do with the successful issue. His skilful disposition of his men behind a fortified laager, which checked the enemy's charges, above all their heavy elephants ; his adoption of the Mughal flanking manoeuvre ; and his alert support of each section of his line the instant he detected any wavering.....these were among the causes of his victory. His men began the battle in no little alarm ; it was their Emperor's cool science and watchful tactics that restored their confidence and gave them back their pluck," says Dr. Lane Poole.[1]

It is worth studying the reasons that prompted Babar to prepare, occupy and dispose of his troops in this manner at the battle of Panipat. Prof. Rushbrook Williams critically analyses the tactics of Babar in these words : "It has been the fashion to assume that Babar's wagon line was a movable fortress, behind which his small force might hope to escape annihilation ; that it was an imitation of the methods employed by the Hussites of Bohemia when confronted by the heavy cavalry of the Empire. Neither of these suppositions will bear investigation. The wagon line was a stratagem of aggression rather than of defence ; it was intended to hold the enemy along an extended front, so that his flank might be open to attacks.

1. Babar.

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Certainly it provided shelter for the Artillerymen and Musketeers ; but it was in no sense of the word a laager or a fortress. The proof of this is not far to seek. Men do not leave many wide gaps in a wall which is intended merely to protect them from attack ; and had Babar designed to construct a "rampart" or a "movable fortress" he would surely have drawn up his wagons in a continuous line, even if he had not surrounded himself on all sides with them. Nor is it correct to compare the wagon line of Panipat with the Hussite wagon units which were trained to manoeuvre and combine forming a real fortress of a movable type. In Bohemia conditions had been essentially different ; infantry were compelled to meet cavalry in the open field, and the wagon laager was invented to shelter the infantrymen. But Babar was a cavalry leader ; it was in his cavalry that his great strength lay, he had no need to cover behind a rampart to escape the shock of hostile horsemen. Even as his principal objective was to provoke, not to avoid, a combat, so was his wagon line a device to destroy the enemy, not a refuge in which his own forces might shun destruction."[1] Nothing is so truthful and clear as this statement about Babar's intentions. It will be noted from records that the area where the battle of Panipat was fought, was open and bare, and there was no natural landmark on which certain advantages could be taken when preparing for the battle. Hence, Babar's army being inferior in number, he had to secure one flank which was rested on the village of Panipat and also had to secure the personal safety of his gunners, who, obviously, had to fire from the open plains and thus were vulnerable to enemy cavalry. Thus Babar had to

1. An empire builder of the 16th Century.

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design a shield to parry the cavalry charge, hold the rushing enemy in the centre, and thus deliver the blow by flank attacks and artillery fire. This is what actually happened to the enemy : "Their front was badly cramped and although they seem to have brought their left wing to bear by adopting the expedient of inclining their line, they had not proper room to employ their strength. This superiority in numbers, so far from benefiting them, became the cause of their downfall.[1]

The battle of Panipat bears a striking resemblance to the battle of Canne during World War II. It may be that Field Marshal Montgomery had studied Babar's war in India."

The battle of Panipat was Canne to the Lodi dynasty. It was the end of their supremacy and their empire. It marked the end of one epoch and the beginning of another.

KANWAHA (1527)

The next formidable rival that Babar faced was the Rana Sanga of Chitor who was dominating the confederacy of the Rajputs. He was the biggest and strongest block that Babar had to fight, prior to his complete domination of India. Babar's supremacy over all his rivals and over India was decided in the battle of Kanwaha in 1527.

The trouble arose over Biana which both the sides claimed. As neither of the contesting parties was prepared to submit to the other, the result was to fight it out.

1. An empire builder of the 16th century.

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Both sides mustered formidable forces.....the Rana had about 200,000 men and Babar had by this timeal so a large force. Both sides began preparations for the oncoming struggle.

Babar had to face a crisis on this occasion. His troops did not want to fight in this battle because they were concerned about their homes and families and primarily, because of the great fighting reputation of the Rajputs. But again, as before, Babar rallied all his men to his cause by fanatical speeches and vows.

After setting his house in order, he advanced to meet the redoubtable enemy. This is how he advanced: "I advanced my wagons (and guns) and tripods with all the apparatus and machines that I had prepared, and marched forward with my army in order of battle...right wing, left wing, and centre in their places. In front were the wagons, gun-carriages, and tripods on wheels, and behind came Ustad Ali Kuli, with a body of his matchlock men, to prevent the communication being cut off between the artillery and the infantry behind, and to enable them to advance and form into line. When the ranks were formed and every man in his place, I galloped along the line encouraging the Begs and men of the centre, right, and left, giving special directions to each division how to act, and to each man orders how to proceed and engage. Then, when all was arranged, I moved the army on in order of battle for a couple of miles, when we camped. The pagans, getting notice of our movements, were on the altert, and came close to our wagons and ditch. I did not intend fighting that day, but sent out a few skirmishers

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by way of taking an omen. They took a number of pagans and cut off their heads, which they brought in.....This raised the spirits of the army wonderfully and gave them confidence."[1]

As before, Babar took great care to prepare his battle positions. Dr. Lane Poole describes it as follows : "As before at Panipat he ranged the gun carriages, and probably the baggage wagons, so as to cover his front, and chained them together at a distance of five paces. Mustafa, from Turkey, ordered his artillery admirably in the Ottoman manner on the left wing, but Ustad Ali had a different method. Where there were no guns or wagons, a ditch was dug, backed up by portable wooden tripod on wheels, lashed together at a few paces apart."[2] He also had kept a larger reserve than before, and completely restored the confidence of the troops by all these preparations for battle.

Now came the crucial battle for the supremacy in India on 16th March, 1527. Here is the official account of the battle as given in the official despatch written by Shaikh Zainuddin : "The battle began about half past nine in the morning, by a desperate charge made by the Rajputs on Babar's right. Bodies of the reserve were pushed on to its assistance ; and Mustafa Rumi, who commanded one portion of the artillery (and matchlocks) on the right of the centre, opened fire upon the assailants. Still, new bodies of the enemy poured on undauntedly, and new detachments from the reserve were sent to resist them.

1. Memoirs of Babar.
2. Babar.

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The battle was no less desperate on the left, to which also it was found necessary to despatch repeated parties from the reserve.....When the battle had lasted several hours, and still continued to rage, Babar sent orders to the flanking columns to wheel round and charge ; and he soon after ordered the guns to advance, and, by a simultaneous movement, the household troops and cavalry stationed behind the cannon were ordered to gallop out in right and left of the matchlock men in the centre, who also moved forward and continued their fire hastening to fling themselves with all their fury on the enemy's centre. When this was observed in the wings they also advanced. These unexpected movements, made at the same time, threw the enemy into confusion. Their centre was shaken ; the men who were displaced by the attack made in flank on the wings and rear were forced upon the centre and crowded together. Still the gallant Rajputs were not appalled. They made repeated desperate attacks on the Emperor's centre, in hopes of recovering the day, but were bravely and steadily received, and swept away in great number. Ustad Ali's huge "balls" did fearful executions among the "heathen". Towards evening the confusion was complete, and the slaughter was consequently dreadful. The fate of the battle was decided. Nothing remained for the Rajputs but to force their way through the bodies of the enemy that were now in their rear, and to effect a retreat. The Emperor pursued them as far as their camp,.....and detached a strong body of horse with orders to pursue the broken troops of the confederates without halting to cut up all they met, and prevent them from re-assembling.[1]

1. Erskine's translation from the despatch.

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Babar had to fight a stubborn enemy, and the victory was not so easy. There were occasions during the fighting when the situation was very grave, and it was touch and go. The Rajputs fought most valiantly. The numerical superiority of the Rajputs put a terrible strain on the Mughals, and it was after a desperate charge that they finally won the day.

The battle of Kanwaha (Kanna) had far-reaching effects. It crushed the confederacy of the Hindus in their bid for power ; and finally it established Babar and his Mughal dynasty securely on the throne of Delhi for the next three centuries.

THE GUJRAT CAMPAIGN (1572-73)

Of all the wars fought during Akbar's reign (of which there were many) his expedition into Gujrat is the most famous and instructive military exploit.

All was not well with Gujrat. It was a scene of constant civil war between the various small districts controlled by the Muslim nobles, and anarchy and raids on the neighbouring countries were the order of the day. The people were oppressed by the tyrannical nobles who ruled over the small principalities (e. g., Surat, Broach, Kaira, Ahmedabad, Baroda, Mahi Kantha and Rewa Kantha, Panch Mahas, Palanpur, Radhanpur, Baliana, Cambay, Khandesh and Kathiawar) and disorder and confusion reigned. In the circumstances Akbar decided to lead a military expedition to this part and clean up the disorder and anarchy that prevailed.

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The Imperial army under Akbar set off for Gujrat on September 1572, with an advance guard of 10,000 horsemen. Very little opposition was met from the opponents during the advance till he reached Surat, a famous maritime fort. But the place was captured without much exertion.

Thus ended the first Gujrat expedition on 4th June, 1573 when Akbar returned to Agra after nine months. But he was not yet destined to have respite from the harassment of the Gujrat nobles. When Akbar left Gujrat he had thought that he had controlled and organised the place, but actually it was not so. No sooner had he left, than the unruly elements, who once had been the rulers, again raised their heads and embarked on the same policy which they had been previously carrying on. This unruly behaviour enraged Akbar and he despatched a second expedition to the place.

After a few marches, he reached Ahmedabad. There the enemy faced him with 20,000 men against his 3,000. As usual he organised the order of battle of his troops into three sections of brigades, centre, right andleft.

The enemy, however, did not expect the arrival of the Imperial troops so fast and were taken by surprise. Stiff hand to hand fighting ensued and the enemy fought with great valour. Eventually the enemy was defeated and Akbar organised the Government on a sound basis. Dr. Vincent Smith says :

"Considering the distance traversed Akbar's second

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Gujrat expedition may be described safely as the quickest campaign on record."[1]

After successfully completing the Gujrat expedition in 43 days, Akbar returned home on 5th October, 1573.

THE MARATHA WAR 1689-1707

Aurangzeb fought many notable battles during his time, but amidst all, Maratha War stands out as most bitter and in which both sides displayed super organisational ability and leadership.

Before we actually discuss the various fights it is essential to have a knowledge of the history of the growth of the Marathas as a nation. It will be recalled that they were a non-entity during the reign of Shahjehan. They gradually changed their status from ordinary tillers of the land to a mighty fighting nation through the able and farsighted guidance of the king of Bijapur. "Gradually they came to be employed in his army, first in garrison duty, and then in the light cavalry, a branch of the service for which they displayed extraordinary aptitude,"[2] says Dr. Lane Poole. It was one of these Marathas, Shivaji, who was the strongest opponent that Aurangzeb faced during his life time.

Shivaji gradually extended his area of activity towards the Mughal territory. He had, however, a surprising skill in harassing the Mughal and looting and plundering their territory. It eventually became difficult for the MughalE mperor

1. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59)
2. A History of India.

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to control him. Efforts were made towards conciliation but the contemptuous behaviour of the Mughal Emperor kept him a sworn enemy for ever. The study of the Maratha Military System is itself a vast subject, and it is difficult to dwell on it at length, in this small volume, but I will attempt to give a brief idea of it to the readers.

The Marathas were mostly guerilla fighters who avoided pitched battles if their adversaries were numerically superior, surprise and swift attacks being the keynote ; they adopted a scorched earth policy whenever the Mughals invaded their territory with their large army. A few incidents will illustrate these points. When the Mughals attacked Konkan, the Marathas laid waste the whole of the country so that there was no fodder left for the animals, they attacked from the rear when least expected, and after the attack they swiftly dispersed among the hills of the Ghats where they could not be followed or found. They also ambushed the stray parties of the Mughal army and ousted them off. Thus the elusive enemy struck terror in the heart of the mighty Mughal army.

Aurangzeb, therefore, planned to dam the source of funds of the Marathas, by exterminating the kingdom of Golkonda and Bijapur. So formidable was the power of the Marathas, that Aurangzeb had to spend 26 years in this part of the country to subdue them.

After prolonged and bitter fighting Bijapur was annexed in 1686 after a long siege. The fort of Golconda was captured in 1687, not by military force but by treachery. Thus Aurangzeb's conquest of the Deccan was completed after a terrible loss of men, money and prestige.

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Sir George Dunbar rightly remarks : "The war of Deccan so depleted the Imperial treasury that for the last ten years of the reign the pay of the troops was usually three years in arrears."[1]

In spite of this long unequal struggle, the Marathas were not subdued by the Mughals. This is well illustrated by Sir George Dunbar : "The years of warfare with the Marathas from 1689 to 1707 proved a disheartening struggle for the Imperial armies. In the Western Ghats the forts offered obstinate resistance, and in the Deccan itself the Marathas plundered the country, cut off convoys and repeatedly defeated the Mughal columns."

"The camp was thirty miles in circumference, and held about a million people, the army consisting of 60,000 cavalry, 100,000 infantry, 3,000 elephants and 50,000 camels. This huge population ate up all the provisions for miles around, and whenever the lines of communications with the north were cut by the Marathas, Glagala ran considerable danger of starvation."[1] Most of the operations conducted in these parts were the reduction of the forts. But these forts were very strong and well manned : the fortresses were well stocked with ammunition and provisions ; a horsed cavalry screen was put forward to keep the attackers at bay from the surrounding area of the fortresses ; sustained fire was kept up day and night to deter the attackers from scaling the walls and other preparations for the attack ; and a ditch was constructed round the forts to keep away men and guns. But

1. A History of India.
2. A History of India.

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in spite of this the Mughals filled the moats with earth, shelled the ramparts with their heavy guns and by means fair and foul (treachery and bribery) subdued these fortresses one by one.

Let us now analyse as to how the Marathas kept on winning such an unequal struggle, and why the Mughals fared so badly against their enemy. The reasons are not far to seek. Dr. Lane Poole had ably summed up the reasons in these words : "The explanation of this colossal failure is to be found partly in the contrast between the characters of the invaders and the defenders. Had the Mughals been the same hardy warriors that Babar led from the valleys of the Hindukush, or had the Rajputs been loyal protagonists who had so often courted destruction in their devoted service of earlier emperors, the Marathas would have been allowed but a short shrift. Aurangzeb had alienated the Rajputs for ever, and they would not risk their lives for him in exterminating a people who were after all Hindus...

As for the Mughals, three or four generations of court-life had ruined their ancient manliness. Babar would have scorned to command such officers as surrounded Aurangzeb—Instead of hardy swordsmen, they had become padded dandies...

The very rank and file grumbled if their tents were not furnished as comfortably as in quarters at Agra, and their requirements attracted an immense crowd of camp followers, twenty times as numerous as the effective strength. So vast a host, was like a plague of locusts in the country ; it devoured everything and though at times it was

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richly provisioned, at others the Marathas cut off communications with the base of supplies in the north, and a famine speedily ensued."

"The Marathas, on the other hand, cared nothing for luxuries, a cake of millet sufficed them for a meal, with perhaps an onion for 'point'. They defended a fort to the last, and then defended another fort. They were pursued from place to place, but were never daunted, and they filled up the intervals of sieges by harassing the Mughal armies, stopping convoys of supplies, and laying waste the country in the path of the enemy. There was no bringing them to a decisive engagement. It was one long series of petty victories followed by larger losses. Nothing was gained that was worth the labour, the Marathas increasingly became objects of dread to the demoralised Mughal army, and the country, exasperated by the sufferings of a prolonged occupation by an alien and licentious soldiery, became more and more devoted to the cause of the intrepid bandits, which they identified as their own."[1]

Thus ended the long drawn out Maratha war during Aurangzeb's reign with a tactical victory, but a strategical loss.

1. The History of the Nations (Vol. 59)

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CHAPTER V

THE MILITARY SYSTEM

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THE MILITARY SYSTEM

It is rather unfortunate that adequate records and details of the military system and organisation of the Mughals are not available for posterity. Whatever little is known had been used and interpreted intensively by all the historians of the past and nothing much is left for our generation to give any new touch to this aspect. But at the same it is interesting to know the prevailing system as it throws light on the subject which has been rather a closed book to the students of Indian Military History.

There are no proper accounts of the Military exploits, the Military organisation and administration of the Mughals. The student has to glean it out from the mass of details in which all these facts have been intermingled. There is every chance of missing some of the points. The chroniclers who have, at places, given some idea of Mughal Army, have left very little information for the period 1525 (the arrival of the Mughals in India) to 1707 (the end of Aurangzeb's reign).

It will be recalled that the Mughals carried out raids on the Indian border with no intention of founding an empire and the dynasty of emperors who ruled the country from 1525 till 1857. Their conquest of the country and ultimately founding of the empire is rather accidental.

Unlike the previous Mughal raids, Babar's expedition

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to India in 1524 has a different character. After the battle of Panipat, Babar decided to continue his occupation of the country and hence settled down with a modern army equipped with modern weapons.

The army of the early Mughals and thereafter their successors had to keep a well-trained and well-equipped army because their conquests and the authority from the throne depended on their force of arms. They retained their power and strength only with the help and prowess of their army. Whenever there was a lapse on this account and the army became inefficient due to low morale, loss of toughness and luxury-loving, that the Mughals lost their hold on the country and on many occasions had to flee after losing decisive battles with the local kings and nobles. Finally, the downfall of the Mughal empire in India came through the inefficiency of their army in 1857.

The success or failure of the army depended on the personality of the reigning sovereign who was also the commander-in-chief. Whenever there was a weak sovereign on the throne he lost control over the army, and there was slackness, indiscipline and inefficiency all round. The system was a hot bed of intrigues and nepotism was openly practised. This resulted in inefficient officers being recruited and also promoted to higher ranks.

"The Mughal army lacked loyalty, patriotism and devotion to duty. All were time-servers and wanted to benefit themselves in all possible ways so long as the going was good. They were very quick to change sides when

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they found that the fortunes of their side were unfavourable. The army was thus, in effect, a body of mercenaries, men who served only for what they could get, and ready at any moment, when things went badly, to desert or transfer themselves to the higher bidder" says Mr. William Irving.[1]

There was constant jealousy and intrigue between the nobles. One tried to out-do the other and thus contributed to the failure of the Mughal army. As the troops were mercenaries they were bought by the others who bid higher and deflected them from the services of one another. Treachery was also rampant and no commander could be sure of his life on the next day.

The army consisted of varied tribes as Persians, Central Asians and Afghan soldiers and it is no wonder that each of these was pulling apart the organisation with his personal selfish interests. They were good individual material but, as a collective body, depended solely and entirely on their leaders. If the leader was a casualty, the whole force broke down and fled away in confusion and disorder. The morale of the individual soldier was far from good. On many occasions they broke away when they found that the battle was going against them. They normally did not put much enthusiasm during the fight because they had to provide their own fighting gear, (horses etc.) and if they were killed they were losers. It has been aptly remarked : "Their cavalry (which are among them very respectable and also

1. The Army of the Indian Mughals.

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well paid) though not backward to engage with sabres, are extremely unwilling to bring their horses within the rcach of our (British) guns ; so that they do not decline so much through fear of their lives, as for their fortunes which are all laid out in the horse they ride on."[1]

These are a few general remarks on the state of the hal army. But this may not be applicable to all the periods of the Mughal history. It may be recalled that during Babar's and Akbar's reign the army consisted of good fighting material and the defence system was good.

During Babar's reign the army was tough, capable of sustained effort and was well led. There were lapses on the morale aspect occasionally but men could be rallied to the cause by inspiring leadership. This is mainly because the Mughals had newly arrived in India, discipline was good, and degeneration had not yet set in. It was only when they had stayed in the country for some appreciable time that they became slack and debauched and lost their fighting qualities.

The efficiency of the Mughal army was low during Humayun's reign because he, as a commander, was weak and the men had become slack, peace-loving and debauchable.

It was during Akbar's reign that the army got back its original fighting qualities. They could march long distances and fight the toughest of battles. The discipline was good, morale high. During marches Akbar had given strict

1, Cambridge History of War.

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instructions that the soil should not be injuriously affected when troops camped for the night and any unavoidable damages had to be paid for on the spot. Orderlies were also posted round the camp so that the troops did not damage the cultivated ground in the vicinity.

The principal arm of the Mughal army was cavalry but elephants also were an important feature. Their co-ordinated employment in battle brought about many victories to the Mughal army. Cavalry was used with great effect in flanking attacks and also attacks in the rear of the enemy.

The army reforms that were carried out in Akbar's time continued throughout the Mughal History and so upto the reign of Aurangzeb. The Viceroys of the provinces had under them local military commanders called "faujdars" who performed the dual function of the police chief as well as that of Military Commanders. These officers were responsible for the maintenance of peace, supervision of military establishments, the command of the local regular troops and all matters connected with the peace, tranquillity and safety of the provinces.

Most of the Mughal emperors did not maintain a large regular standing army because of financial stringency and also because of the non-availability of sufficient number of Mughals in India. The bulk of the army consisted of irregular forces which were raised and maintained by the local independent kings and chieftains. These forces were supplied to the Mughal emperor as military aid when demanded. Most of the chieftains led troops during war and thus rendered valuable service to the emperor.

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In addition, there were military officers employed directly by the emperor who were responsible for the direct recruitment of the forces and service under the Crown. The main arm thus organised was the cavalry, but infantry and artillery were not in so much strength.

It has been estimated that the regular army was only 25,000 men. But the views of the authorties are open to challenge. On the moderate side it has been accepted as 45,000 Cavalry, 5000 elephants and innumerable infantry (the figures are not known).

There was no organised supply or, ordnance services. The Rajas and mansabdars were responsible for raising, equipping as well as maintaining the forces allotted to them, as their share or quota of contribution. Each man was responsible for his own equipment, weapon and transport and nothing was given from the state. Dr. Vincent Smith remarks : "No commissariat service existed. Supplies were provided by huge bazars marching with the camp, and by the nomadic tribes of Banjaras, who made a profession of carrying grain with which to feed armies.

The system of ranks of the various nobles, chiefs or rajas depended on the strength of the force recruited and supplied by them to the emperor. There were thirty three grades ranging from Mansabdars (Commanders) of 10 to 10,000. There was no proper system of appointment, retention, promotion, or dismissal, as they all held their posts for the duration and pleasure of the Mughal emperor.

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Each class of Mansabdar carried with it definite pay out of which he had to defray the expenses towards the impediments. Unfortunately, no one was ever granted full year's pay and there were various deductions from the pay on various accounts. Gradually, the pay element died out from the rank and it began to be considered as honorary on the degree of contribution of the chiefs.

Another feature was the grant of "Sowar" rank in the addition to the "Zat class" rank. This was tantamount to extra pay depending on the supplementary body of sowars (horsemen) authorities. This rank was authorised to officers of 5000 or downwards and was graded as first, second and third class. When the "Zat" and "sowars" were of equal strength, it was first class, if sowar was half his Zat second and third class if sowar was less than half or no sowar at all.

In addition, the state paid troops were called "Dakhili" and gentlemen troopers were termed as "Ahadis". These troops were under the direct pay of the state and were distributed to the various Mansabdars. Of course they had different commanding officers even though they were distributed to the various Mansabdars.

Artillery was the speciality of the Mughals and by careful use of their weapon they had won many famous battles. Babar and Akbar took special interest in the manufacture of artillery pieces and on occasions they personally supervised the casting of the barrels. The infantry were not of good quality and for most of their attacks the Mughals used the cavalry in their traditional

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role of outflanking movements. It has been remarked by some authorities that Indian infantry of those days were mere night watchmen and baggage and camp guards.

Elephants were used but, having learnt from past experience that these animals, when they are hurt, at times convert victory into rout, commanders employed them for mounting archers and musketeers. The emperor and commanders mostly used horses for their conveyance as these were more mobile and would not stand out as prominent targets.

Inspite of all these innovations and experiences of Commanders there was something inherently weak in the Mughal military system. On the march the whole army was moving like a city with all pomp, baggage and display. This was fatal to military efficiency. Some of the emperors like Babar and Akbar avoided these but others used to fall prey to the procedure which had been continuing for a long time. The male and female courtiers, the imperial court, bazar, concubines and all and sundry, followed the camp like a moving city with there sult that on many occasions the element of surprise was lost and the enemy had to be engaged in pitched battles. Even the treasures accompanied a fighting column. This is how Abul Fazal describes the situation : "His Majesty has intented an admirable method of encamping his troops, which was a source of much comfort to them. On an open ground they pitch the imperial seraglio, the audience hall, and the musician's gallery, all occupying a space the length of which is 1630 yards. To the right

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and left and behind, is an open space of 300 yards which no one but the guards are allowed to enter. Behind their tents, at some distance, the officers and workshops are placed and at a further distance of 30 yards behind them, at the four corners of the camp, the bazars. The nobles are encamped without on all sides, according to their rank."[1]

Also the governmental structure being based on military system was bound to fall whenev there was deflection in the loyalty of the viceroys and thus it occasionally led to serious internal troubles. These internal wars consumed a substantial amount of money without much gain. Thus the Mughal army system was defective for the stability and security of the central government.

It has been said by various authorities that the army of the Mughals was weak when compared with the European army of that age. This might have been so but I am inclined to disagree with this view. The science and technique of fighting was quite advanced and if the European Historians are reminded of the conquest of Europe by the Mughals they will reserve their judgment on this account. The Indian Mughals were of the same breed and because of their out-moded opponents in India they might not have been able to give out their best.

To sum up : "In short, excepting want of personal courage, every other fault in the list of military vices may be attributed to the degenerate Mughals, indiscipline,

1. Ain-i-Akbari.

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want of cohesion, luxurious habits, inactivity, bad commissariat and cumbrous equipment"[1].

The Mughals started off well when they arrived in India but subsequently their technique of fighting deteriorated owing to their long stay in India, due to the social and political conditions of the country. However, they maintained some semblance of orderliness in the country where there was none amongst its population and the rajas. Mr Elphinstone very succintly remarks: "They forward a cavalry admirably fitted to prance in a procession, and not ill adapted to a charge in a pitched battle, but not capable of any long exertion, and still less of any continuance of fatigue and hardship."

1. The Army of the Indian Mughals.

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CHAPTER VI

MILITARY TACTICS AND STRATEGY

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MILITARY TACTICS AND STRATEGY

There was nothing startling or new with which the Mughal army fought but they used fire arms and artillery to a great extent. Their use of cavalry was also not an innovation but their employment on attacks from the flanks was no doubt a new method employed in wars in East.

Great care was taken to deploy the artillery. Ramparts were built and the wagons securely linked up with chains and hides so that they could not be run over by the on-rushing cavalry charge. It was essential to afford adequate protection to the cannoneers so that they could fire their cannon without any danger of being interfered with by the enemy. The artillery fire was not rapid and, it is said, that they could fire at the most sixteen rounds a day.

The infantry men were very adept in the handling of muskets. They were afraid that their beards might catch fire. An European traveller named Mandelslo gives the account in the following words : "They know nothing of the distinction of vanguard, main battle, and rear guard, and understand neither front nor file nor make any battle-line, but fight confusedly without any order."[1]

The artillery was immobile and could not follow up ny pursuit of the enemy. "In an action the guns of the

[1] he History of the Nation (Vol. ;

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Indian army are generally immovable and their cavalry all motion. The object of the batteries is to fire as long as possible previously to being taken, and of the horse, to secure their retreat if discomfited, unfettered by any incumbrance" says Mr. Blacker.[1]

"The attack started on signal from the trumpeters. It was always delivered from the battle order. The artillery opened fire first and the army formed behind in the battle order. When guns were supposed to have done their work and had sufficiently demoralised the opposing army, successive charges were delivered first from one wing, then the other. The horsemen began with matchlock fire and a discharge of arrows, finally coming to close quarters and hand to hand fighting with sword, mace or spear" says Mr. Irving.[1]

Elephant was another source of strength but its employment had its drawbacks. Dr. Lane Poole says : "The elephants serve them for a trench, to oppose the first attempt of the enemy ; but it often comes to pass that the artificial fires, which are made use of to frighten these creatures, put them in such a disorder, that they do much harm and mischief among those who brought them to the field, than they do among the enemies."[2]

The outcome of the battle depended on the presence or absence of the leader. The leader had to be conspicuous by his presence and hence he rode an elephant and was surrounded by standard bearers and other bodyguards. This had a disadvantage, when the seat of the

1. The Army of the Indian Mughals.
2. The Story of the Nations (Vol. 59).

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leader was found empty the troops turned back and fled the battle-field.

There were many occasions when individual combats took place. After the organised fighting was over, the leaders or the generals fought single combats and decided the issues which otherwise might have been left undecided. Thus the fighting was a curious mixture between the old and the new.

When fighting battles the Mughals generally selected an area which was open country as this facilitated their cavalry charge. They disliked a closed country, hills and townships which did not permit them room for manoeuvre of the cavalry arm. It will be noted that the Mughal army fared very badly against the elusive Afghan and Maratha guerilla fighters. They could not pursue them when the enemy retired to the hills.

Generally the troops undertake plundering as soon as a victory is won. But these were normally discouraged and stern punishments were awarded to those caught in the act of plundering and looting. Akbar was rather very cautious about it as it alienated the sympathy of the local population.

The Central Asian practice of displaying the heads of the vanquished was followed. A pyramid of the heads of the slain was formed. This was rather inhuman and the practice had no cogent reasoning behind it.

Most of the strongholds were forts which were built with great care so that they could withstand siege for a long

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time. These forts were built in strategic places and were selected for their natural strength and inaccessibility. Detailed defences and moats were built round the fort, the walls were high and thick so that they could not be breached by cannon or scaled by infantry and lastly there was enough room for provisioning the defenders so that they could hold themselves against all attacks by the enemy for long periods. A few famous fort swere—Ahmedanagar, Ajaigarh, Aligarh, Asirgarh, Bharatpur, Chingalpat, Daulatabad, Dharwar, Hathras, Kalinagar, Nagpur and Trichinopoly. These are only a few and it was essential to have forts. Mr. Irving rightly says : "These arrangements were rendered necessary from the importance of these strongholds, both as a means of retaining hold of the country and owing to their employment as great store-houses and arsenals.[1]

The siege operations to reduce fortresses was a complicated business. As they were strong built and as defence was generally stronger, it was rather difficult to force them to surrender. The artillery could do very little damage against the strong walls. The only place where they could be easily breached was the entrance gate and for this elephants were normally employed. But for the elephants it was a tough job as the gates were spiked and also strong and well defended. Scaling ladders were also employed for sending up the infantry over the walls but it was very risky and entailed heavy casualties. It was also difficult to put up the ladders against the walls.

The Mughals were very good marchers but it was a

(1) The Army of the Indian Mughals.

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spectacle when they were on the march with all their baggage and paraphernalia. First of all they never started marching without the blessing of the astrologers and they took a long time to start moving. The baggage train led and were followed by the army and then the emperor's party followed by the court officials and servants. The army could march about 22 miles a day but they were not so good when compared with the European army of the same age. However, by Indian standards, they were good. The normal precautions of scouts, spies, escorts and patrols were employed in order to prevent any surprise attack by the enemy.

In the beginning the discipline of the army was good but gradually it deteriorated as the emperors took less and less care of their men. It was on the whole lax.

There was nothing much to know about the strategical thought and policy of the Mughal Army. As they were aliens they had to be militant. After the empire was founded by Babar it was their policy to consolidate their gains and even add to it whenever possible, to increase their domain. Some of the emperors tried to do so through force of arms, and others by statesmanlike acts *e.g.* Akbar's marriage with the Rajput princesses. Owing to the lack of communications and distance, most of the wars fought by the Mughals were isolated and they could deal with them one after the other. Therefore, there was not much necessity for any strategic co-ordination for the employment of their army. Their political and military affairs were intermingled and hence no difficulty arose in their settlement.

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On the whole the Mughal Army had no military character. They had no efficiency worth the name and they fought only through religious zeal for Jihad. It is rather amazing as to how they lasted for over 300 years in such a condition.

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CHAPTER VII

THE MILITARY INSTITUTIONS

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THE MILITARY INSTITUTIONS

The recruitment in the army was done by the local nobles who selected men of their own choice. A man generally found a patron of his own clan or country and then served him. There was a regular system of recruitment in the army by the recruiting officers called "Bakhshis." These recruiting officers were employed both by the emperor and other subordinate kings and nobles who had their own armies for which they were paid.

The pay and allowances of the men were governed by the Mansabs whose pay and allowances were according to the class they held and their remuneration included all elements authorised for their men also. Details of the ranks have already been given in the previous chapter. Normally, pay and allowances were sanctioned for the full 12 months of the year. But it was only on rare occasions that any one got the full year's pay. There were other petty deductions on account of expenses of the elephants and cattle. Usually, the Mansabdar retained 5 p.c. of the pay for himself and distributed the remainder to the force under him. Accounts were maintained in detail in all pay matters and deductions on account of absence, desertion, sickness, illness, etc. were allowed.

Honours and awards were also in vogue. Men and officers were rewarded for their act of valour and loyal service to the state. These awards were given in the form of titles, robes of honour, gifts and money and other articles,

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kettle-drums, standards and ensigns and display of various emblems like fish Yak-tail etc. In other words the ego of the men was kept satisfied so that they remained loyal to the emperor as long as possible. This was highly essential in the country when men changed sides and loyalty too soon and too frequently.

There was one very novel feature. The horses were very well looked after and detailed instructions were issued on the method of feeding of animals. Here is Father Catrou's description : "Horses are fed very differently in India from the mode followed in Europe. In a soil that is dry and parched by the intense heat of the sun, very little forage is to be obtained, except on the bank of the rivers, the want of it is supplied by a sort of seasoned paste. In the morning bread is prepared, compounded of sugar and butter, which is given to them by way of breakfast. In the evening rice milk is made, mixed with pepper and aniseed : this is for their supper."

Each horse was given a name by the Emperor. A few examples are Agile as the wind, Heartly lived, Field flyer, Eagle, Despairing, Gazelle, The sea, Animated and so on. The bases of naming these horses were either their action, size, colour or whether they were Arab, Persian or Turkish horses. Thorough details of the horses were kept—records were maintained and branding was also done. The king's horses were branded thus ɔ and the mansabdar horses marked thus ʂ~

The grooming and the feeding of the horses were done by expert grooms who were well trained. While feeding

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the horses the diet was well balanced in order to reduce flatulence in their inside.

There was a condition that king's horsemen must have a Turkish-bred horse and not an Indian one. It was because the Indian horses were timid and restive.

Similarly, elephants were also well cared for and groomed. The elephants were also named Expert, Handsome, Tall, Male-lion, Army conqueror, Lion slayer, Pear-like and so on. These were given according to the fancy of the king or other peculiarities of the animal. Like horses, these animals were also well trained so that they could stand artillery and musket fire, rocket fire and other fireworks. In addition to training they were given alcoholic drinks to boost up their spirit to fight. They were fed daily with 165 lbs. of foodstuff (dash) flour, rice, meat, butter, fine spices and sugarcane.

The cannon were also named—Great house, Cruel-killer, Army victor, bail of war, Royal riches, His Highness, Earth consuming, Custom, Gate, Conqueror, Gear, Whirlwind, Thunder, Unjust, Man-eater and Work of fire and so on. These cannon could take a ball of 29 to 120 lbs. and were favourites of the kings. These accompanied the emperor on campaigns.

Another military institution current among the Mughal Army was the name given to the generals : Flourishing, Great among men, Field Clearer, God's Least one, Lion of God, Giver-Taker of favours, Animated, Fortunate, Gainer, Obliging, Useful, Pitiable, Chief Cap-

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tain, Confidents, Full Heart, For Ever, Hatchet, Good sight, Daily Bread. Quick-witted and so on. These titles were given to the generals who were in good favour of the king and they were held in esteem and honoured by all.

Various types of weapons were in use. The main item of defensive weapons were headpiece, body armour, Elephant armour, Greaves and Harhai. These were much liked and great care was taken to adorn them.

The offensive arms were : Swords and shields, maces, battle axes, spears and daggers. The long arm weapons were bow and arrow, matchlock, pistols, rockets and cannon. All these weapons were not carried by one man but were carried on the horse of his follower. These holdings formed the first line and 2nd line requirements and to meet wastage in war. The king, of course, had special swords and shields and were named in the same manner as his favourite horses, elephants and generals. Some of the shields were so strong that they could resist a musket ball. Heavy and light artillery were creditably used during the wars. Great care was taken to manufacture the pieces in India under the direct supervision of the emperor, and the chief of the artillery. One such founding is well described by Babar in his Memoirs ; "Around the mould they had erected eight furnaces for melting the metal. From the foot of each started a channel which ended in the mould. As soon as I had arrived, the holes to allow the flow of metal were opened. The fused metal rushed into the mould like boiling water. After a time, before the mould was full, the fused metal from the furnaces began to flow very slowly, either because of their size, or because the amount of material had been wrongly calculated. Ustad Kuli Khan

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in a state that cannot be described, wished to fling himself into the very midst of the melted copper. I made much of him ordered him to rank of honour, and thus succeeded in calming him. A day or two afterwardswhen the mould had cooled down, it was opened. Ustad Kuli Khan was over-whelmed with joy, sent me word that the boxes of the pieces had no fault and that a chamber could easily be made in it."

"The body of the cannon was uncovered and a certain number of artificers were set to finish it, while he busied himself with the preparation of the chamber."[1]

Details of dimensions of each gun are not available but here is one which is available :—

Length	...17 Feet
Depth bore	...15 ,,
Muzzle diameter	1 Foot
Bore (of diameter)...	6 Inches

There was no regular drill or training manoeuvres in the Mughal army. Checking was exercised by asking nobles to be present twice a day and men occasionally with their horses and elephants. No regular dress or uniform was adhered to by the Army. Mr. Irving says : "As for uniform, the only sign of it originally was a red turban worn by all in the imperial employ. For the great mass of the army there was usually no uniformity of dress, but in a general way each class of troops dressed in a similar style : Persians in one way, Mughals in another,

1. Babar's Memoirs.

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Hindustani Mohammedans could be distinguished from Rajputs and so forth.[1]"

There were however a few regiments that were properly clothed and were called, Red Regiment, but others were known from the colour of their coats, red, yellow or black. Also the colour of their clubs was another indication of their regiment.

It will be seen that the Mughals had some semblance of organisation in their army which may not have been good and adequate from European standards but were the best in the country in those days. Men were properly recruited and sent to a particular branch of the army ; they were paid, though not adequately and fully, they were equipped with personal arms and also with artillery, they were clothed and equipped, animal management was good and lastly the Mughals manufactured their own arms and weapons, specially artillery pieces.

Whatever might have been their system and organisation, they were better off as they were not dependent for their requirements on the foreigners but manufactured their own in this country. Initially the troops were armed with old weapons but later on this defect was remedied. "One armed with a bow, will combat by the side of his comrade carrying a musket or a lance" says Father Catrou.[2]

Many authorities are vehement in their criticism of

1. The Army of the Indian Mughals.
2. History of the Mughal Dynasty.

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the Mughal Army, its system and institution, but I feel that their strength and splendour struck awe in the hearts of the Indians and as long as they achieved their aim and maintained it successfully by force of arms, it was all that mattered.

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